

Julia Brownley NEWS

41st Assembly District

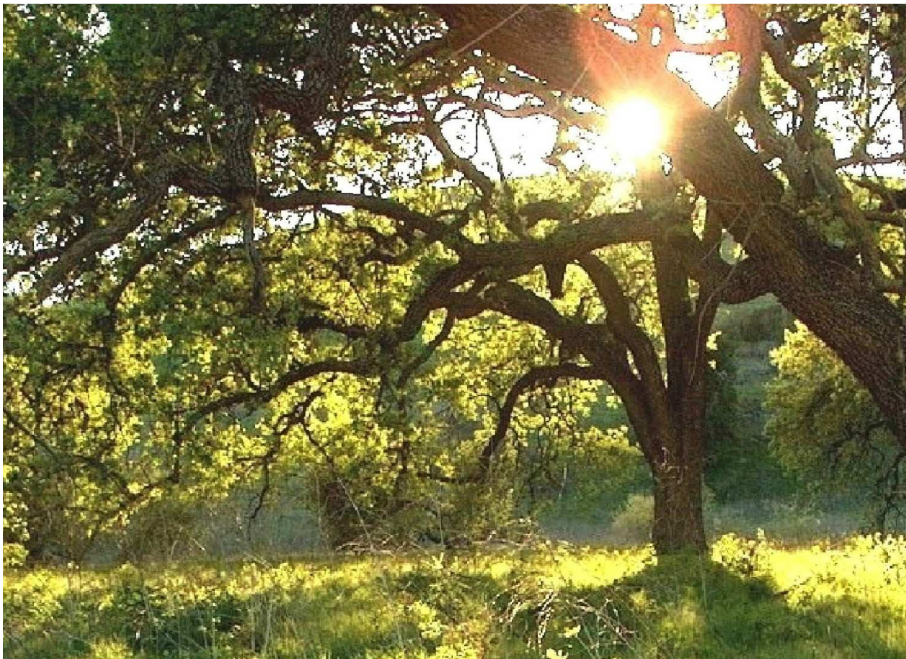


A MONTHLY ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER TO THE 41ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT
(Including Agoura, Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Encino, Hidden Hills, Lake Sherwood, Malibu, Oak Park, Pacific Palisades, Port Hueneme, South Oxnard, Santa Monica, Tarzana, Topanga, Westlake Village, and Woodland Hills)

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Governor's Budget Proposal to Close 48 California State Parks is Unacceptable

Although I mentioned the park closures included in the Governor's proposed 2008-09 state budget in my January e-newsletter, I want to expand on the subject since it has been the #1 topic of the e-mails I'm receiving from my constituents. All of them outraged.



Three state parks in the 41st AD are on the Governor's chopping block – Will Rogers State Historic Park, Topanga State Park, and Los Encinos State Park – but so are 45 other parks up and down California.

California's state parks are not expendable frills. They are precious cultural, historic, and natural resources. They are affordable places of recreation and respite for millions of people every year, many who travel great

distances from the urban core and blighted neighborhoods to experience the beauty of nature. They have been acquired for the state to preserve and protect for a reason.

My office got a call recently from a local chamber of commerce that was getting ready to organize other chambers to oppose park closures, recognizing that they help our economy and that closures will create severe economic hardship on their visitor-serving businesses. The Governor says that closing these parks will save \$13.3 million. The budget shortfall is \$14.5 **billion**. Such closures would account for an essentially meaningless fraction of the gap. The loss in revenues to the state just from impacted businesses could easily meet or exceed any hoped-for "savings."

As for the three parks in the 41st AD, each is a unique treasure.

- **Los Encinos State Park** in the San Fernando Valley was the hub of the historic Rancho El Encino. Once an early California rancho, it is an urban oasis, and includes the original nine-room adobe, a blacksmith shop, natural spring, and a pond. Visitors, neighbors, and employees of surrounding businesses all use Los Encinos as a place to relax and regroup from their busy lives. It was recorded as part of the 1769 Portola Expedition, and is along the historic El Camino Real.
- **Topanga State Park** is located in the heart of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Marked by spectacular geological formations, including earthquake faults and marine fossils, it features 36 miles of trails through open grassland, live oaks, and spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean. It is considered the world's largest wildland within the boundaries of a major city – the City of Los Angeles – and is enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of people every year.
- **Will Rogers State Historic Park.** In the 1930s, Will Rogers – trick roper, philosopher, radio personality and movie star – was the most popular actor in Hollywood. His beautiful 186-acre ranch home in Pacific Palisades was acquired by the state in 1944, and is now open to the public after a major renovation. It includes the original restored structures, a polo ground and horseback riding, hiking trails and a connector to the Backbone Trail that takes hardy hikers all the way to Point Mugu.

I asked to be appointed as a member of the Assembly Budget Subcommittee #3 on Environmental Resources to support and defend California's state parks and natural resources, not to padlock them away from **the public who owns each and every one of them.**

We need a much more balanced and long-term approach to getting the state's finances in order. This means looking very hard at our dependence on unstable and unpredictable personal and corporate income taxes, and figuring out structural changes to help keep us from finding ourselves in the position year after year of scrambling reactively to downswings in the economy. I expect to be a part of those discussions in the Assembly Budget Committee.

The California Legislature must address the persistent structural problems in our state budget, and create a budget that reflects our collective values. This includes protecting our parks and open spaces and ensuring full access to the public. Barriers to that access – whether through park closures, or raising fees that many Californians cannot afford, or in any other way – are not acceptable and are not the solution to our greater budget problem.

Your voice, and your outrage need to continue to be heard loudly. And I will continue to work tirelessly with you to ensure that all state parks remain open and accessible.

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